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ABSTRACT

This document reports on a collaboration between Webster University (Missouri) and Pattonville School District (Missouri) to develop a Professional Development School (PDS) Partnership. The goals of the partnership centered around student learning and reflected five themes: cultural diversity, technology to support learning, constructivist learning, leadership and collaboration, and action research and reflective practice. Six specific goals are outlined, each with objectives, sample of current activities, and project status reports. Challenges encountered during the development phase included systemic, organizational, and personal issues. For example, asymmetrical power relationships among individuals and institutions led to intense discussions about "turf," hierarchy, status, and control. Learning to collaborate, moving from independence to interdependence, involved building trust, developing understanding of what it was like to be "on the other side," and learning to dialogue. Through the PDS Partnership, both organizations acknowledged the need for the collaboration to become embedded within the educational system, requiring organizational changes that allowed for continuous improvement through intense dialogue rather than "one-shot" workshops or a series of activities added to the educators' crowded schedule. The paper includes charts as visual aids for the project. (ND)

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# TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTERDEPENDENCE: LEARNING TO COLLABORATE

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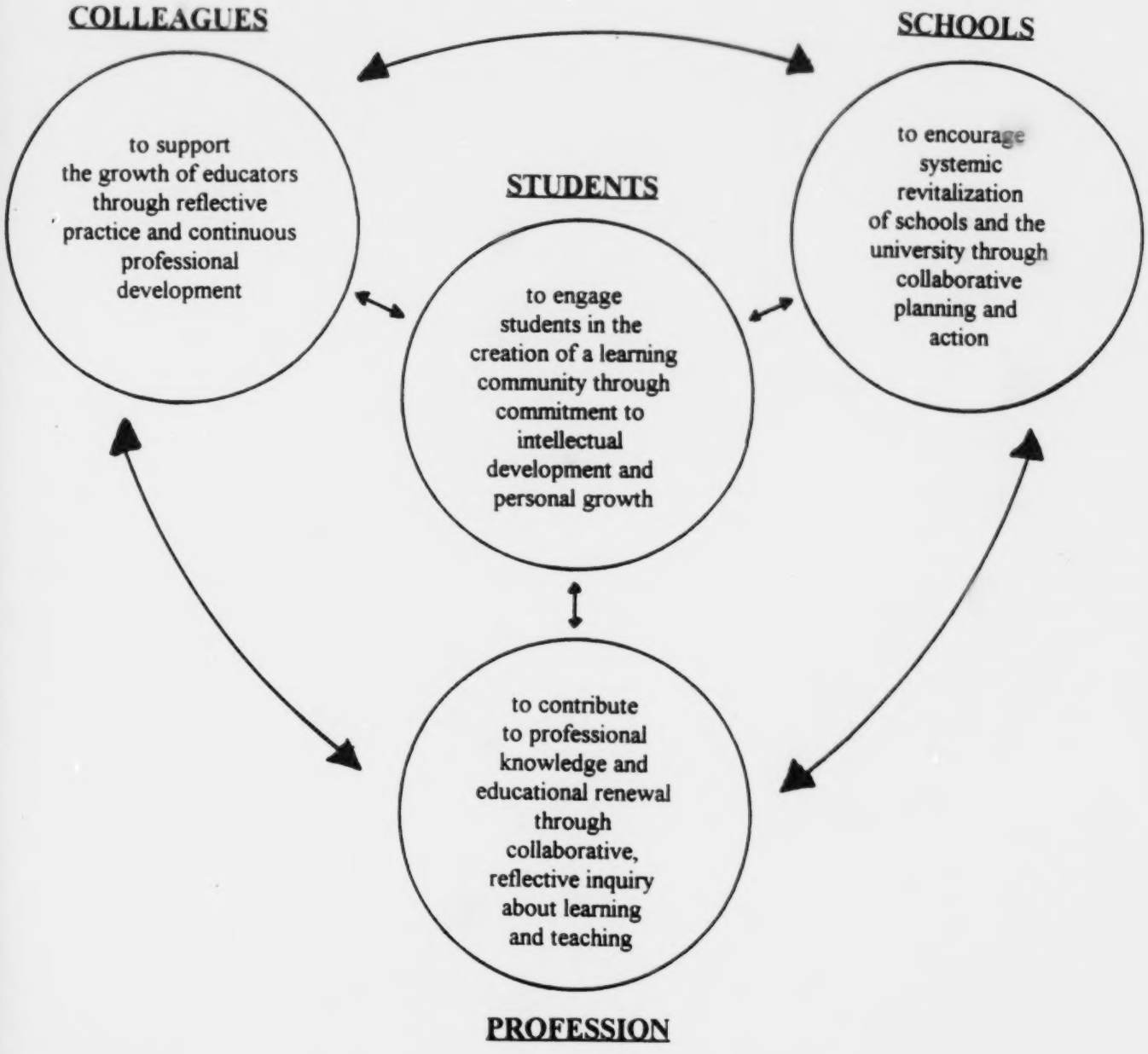
**Pattonville/Webster Professional Development Schools Partnership**
**Vision Statement**

**We envision the Pattonville/Webster Partnership as a community of learners who**

- **Nurture and spark reflection, inquiry, collaboration, leadership, creativity, renewal and vitality.**
- **Strive for greater understanding and efficacy in facilitating learning.**
- **Invite and encourage the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in our evolving learning community.**

# GOALS

The Pattonville/Webster Professional Development School Partnership invests in the future of our students, colleagues, schools, and profession.


COLLEAGUES
to support the growth of educators through reflective practice and continuous professional development
SCHOOLS
to encourage systemic revitalization of schools and the university through collaborative planning and action
STUDENTS
to engage students in the creation of a learning community through commitment to intellectual development and personal growth
to contribute to professional knowledge and educational renewal through collaborative, reflective inquiry about learning and teaching
PROFESSION

## Transformation through Interdependence: Learning to Collaborate

Webster University and Pattonville School District are collaborating to develop a Professional Development Schools (PDSs) Partnership. The formation of this partnership accesses the resources of the two institutions and is transforming the learning environment and culture of both. Because of the wide variety of pre-service programs at Webster and the level of interest among Pattonville teachers district-wide, it was decided to form a partnership with the whole district rather than just one school. This involved intense dialogue over time with every stakeholder group, dissemination of information, and the formation of a representative "exploratory team" who took the information to their interest groups for discussion and feedback to the team. Both institutions have entered this partnership with a high level of commitment, knowing the risks involved, and willing to work through the disequilibrium that transformation incurs.

### Shared Understanding:

During preliminary discussions in the formation of the partnership, a shared understanding about learning emerged between the two institutions. Partners agreed that individuals learn by constructing meaning from their experiences through a process of exploration, discovery, application, and reflection. Professional development for both institutions is viewed as a seamless, on-going process from pre-service through retirement in an environment of inquiry and shared decision making.

### Shared Inquiry:

The partnership uses collaborative action research and other reciprocal scholarship to study individual and systemic issues related to simultaneous renewal. Action research is also an important element in the development of teacher leadership. As teachers begin to collect and analyze data, they move to a level of scholarship that generates insights and contributes to the profession. The interdependence of theory and practice is better understood as university -based educators, school-based educators, administrators, and pre-service teachers becoming partners in learning. The goals of the partnership center around student learning and reflect five themes: cultural diversity, technology to support learning, constructivist learning, leadership and collaboration, action research and reflective practice.

### Shared Challenges:

Some of the challenges encountered during the developmental phase of the partnership include systemic, organizational and personal issues:

Asymmetrical power relationships among individuals and institutions led to intense discussions about "turf", hierarchy, status and control. Stakeholders voiced concerns that their interests might be jeopardized. This was especially evident among teachers and pre-service teachers who perceived themselves as having less "power."

Learning to collaborate, moving from independence to interdependence, continues to be a journey. This involved building trust, beginning to understand what it was like "on the other

side." Although the university professors had taught in P-12 schools, few of the school-based educators had taught in the university. Everyone had been a student, however, they needed to re-think being learners. Learning to dialogue, rather than speaking authoritatively, as "teachers" with each other presented another challenge. Everyone knew how to talk. Now, partners are learning to dialogue. It took intense practice and the investment of time to begin really communicating. Collaboration also involved the change of status relationships of doing "*to for*" someone, to collegial relationships doing "*with*" someone. During the past year, the exploratory team which represented all groups of stakeholders from both institutions met regularly to work out a vision statement, goals and objectives and the first year's activities. Plans are being made that will impact the direction and content of teacher-preparation classes, placement of student teachers, and instructional practice in the P-12 classrooms. As an initial effort at sharing resources, Pattonville has offered extensive in-service training sessions to the pre-service teachers who will be doing practicum and/or student teaching in Pattonville next year. University professors are also participating. Pattonville teachers have shared their experiences at Webster graduate and undergraduate classes and served as adjunct instructors. Webster is also discussing the re-design of a graduate program based on cognitive learning theory, diversity, technology, leadership and collaboration, and action research to service the partnership. Plans are being made to offer graduate and undergraduate courses of study in Pattonville.

## Shared Renewal:

Through the Professional Development School Partnership, both Webster and Pattonville acknowledge the need for the collaboration to become embedded within the educational system. This requires organizational changes that allow for continuous improvement through intense, deep dialogue rather than "one-shot" workshops, or a series of activities that become "add-ons" to the educators' crowded schedule. Because of the complexity of this partnership, communication within and across institutions continues to be a critical issue that can make or break simultaneous renewal. At one level, there is a basic need for access to information. Broader participation in decision making requires greater access to information than is customary for either institution. At another level, beyond information, is the deep dialogue that builds trust and encourages grappling with fundamental questions about learning, teaching and change. Expanding the participation in deep, reflective dialogue is a central focus to developing interdependence.

The State Department of Education is actively promoting the formation of PDS partnerships throughout the state by establishing nine Regional Professional Development Centers. The Danforth Foundation has initiated the St. Louis Professional Development Schools Collaborative which nurtures and supports 15 university/school partnerships. The Webster/Pattonville Partnership participates in these initiatives. It is distinct as a district-wide relationship.

Participants in the Webster University/Pattonville Partnership recognize that this renewal in an on-going process, that other issues will emerge as they learn and grow together. The level of honesty and trust continues to grow along with the belief that real, substantive change is possible. Webster and Pattonville have launched an adventure that is both challenging and renewing, an adventure that promises to transform their identity and purpose.

# Pattonville School District/Webster University
# Professional Development School Partnership
# Professional Development Schools Collaborative Plan

## **Goal 1:** To Develop MAT/Graduate Studies and Global Studies/Travel for Professional Development of Pattonville and Webster Educators

**Objective:** To offer classes on site at Webster's Northwest Plaza classroom facility or at Pattonville schools. To design courses that meet the professional needs of teachers and administrators. To facilitate communication with and travel to other countries. To collaborate with Webster's international program.

**Sample of Current Activities:**

- "Professional Development Planning Course" team taught by Webster's Acting Dean Brenda Fyfe and Pattonville's Professional Development Coordinator Marge Rosenthal

**Project Status:** Implement February 1997

- "Comparative Educational Systems" a course offered at the Pattonville Learning Center, taught by Kathleen Brown, to be coordinated with Debbie Hauser and the International Studies Committee

**Project Status:** Course begins March/April 1997, travel in summer 1997

Budget to support conference travel, defraying expenses for international travel, travel grant applications, professional development planning

## **Goal 2:** To Develop An Outdoor Learning Environment and Interdisciplinary Project

**Objective:** To engage teachers and students in interdisciplinary, active learning. To provide a place for community engagement.

**Sample of Current Activities:**

- Creating a "Naturescape" on the ground of Pattonville High School

**Project Status:** Project began in Fall 1996

## **Goal 3:** To Facilitate Change Within The System, To Look at Change Systematically

**Objective:** To form a vertical team and to train them in the vertical team process. To engage the vertical team in the district's planning process.

**Sample of Current Activities:**

- The Partnership has a district vertical team which is participating in the state's vertical team project, with two trained facilitators (one at Pattonville, one at Webster)
- Bridgeway School has created a building-level vertical team with weekly meetings

Budget to support substitute pay for teachers and principals to enable their participation in vertical team training and monthly meetings.

## **Goal 4:** To Increase Principal Involvement

**Objective:** To engage building principals and assistant principals in ongoing dialogue about professional development. To enhance the leadership opportunities and involvement within buildings.

**Sample of Current Activities:**

- Vertical teaming has brought additional principals into the dialogue. Providing "principal partners" allows principals to attend partnership meetings.

Budget is to support "Principal Partners" (substitutes) and possible summer training in Action Research and Vertical Teaming

## **Goal 5:** To Involve Preservice Teachers In Schools Earlier And In Long-Term Mentoring Relationships

**Objective:** To build long-term relationships between university faculty, inservice and preservice teachers. To improve retention of beginning teachers through more comprehensive and engaging professional development activities.

**Sample of Current Activities:**

- To bring preservice teachers into schools to work with mentors and students
- To locate school/university activities within school buildings and school hours

Budget to support stipends for preservice teachers to work in school buildings on a regular basis, to provide grants for them to act as tutors, and to offer stipends for university faculty for time spent in the district's buildings and away from campus.

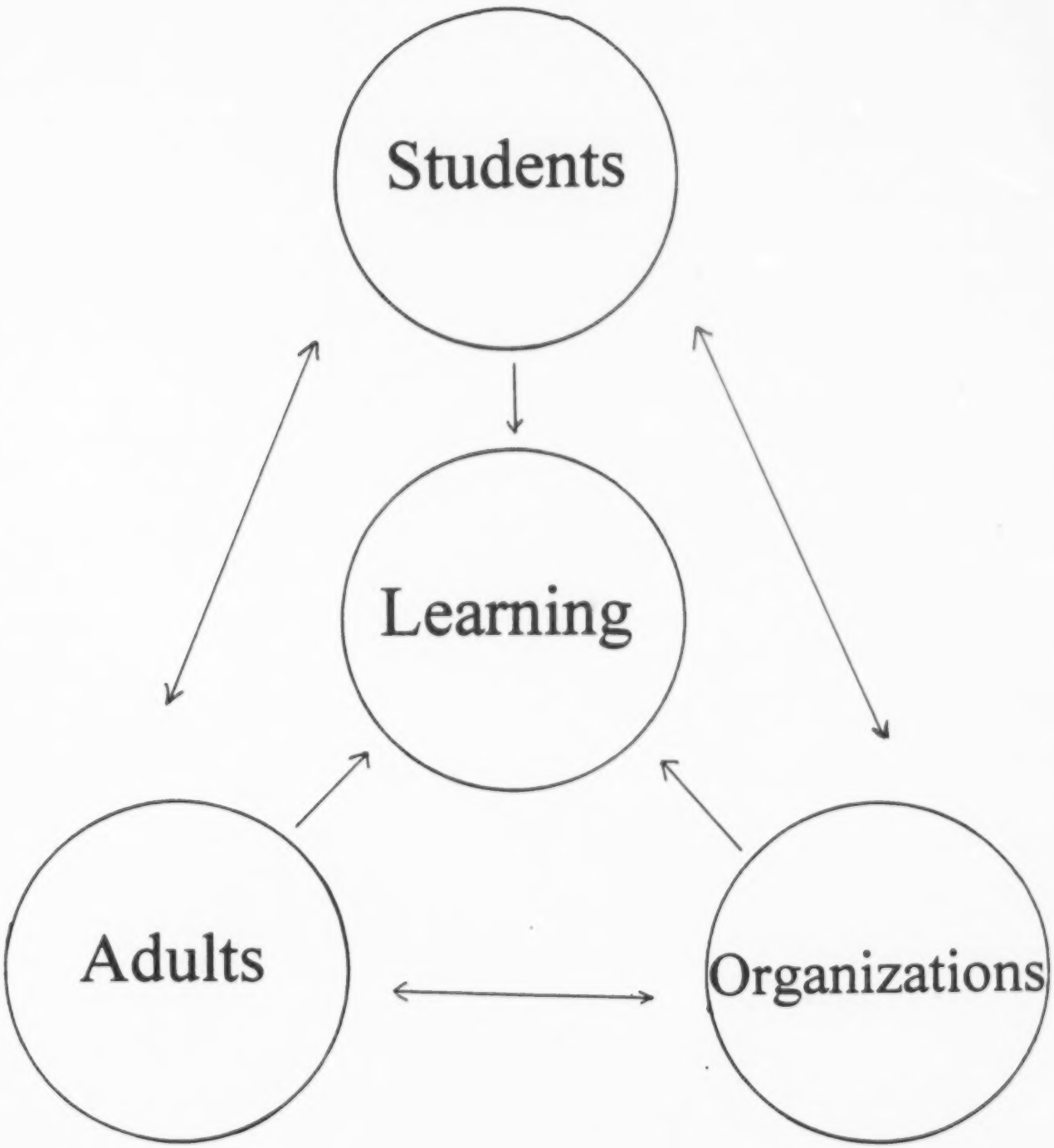
## **Goal 6:** To Engage In Action Research As A Means To Promote Professional Development

**Objective:** To provide training in Action Research. To provide time and collegial support for Action Research activities.

**Sample of Current Activities:**

- Action Research team at Pattonville High School

Budget to support Action Research Training in the summer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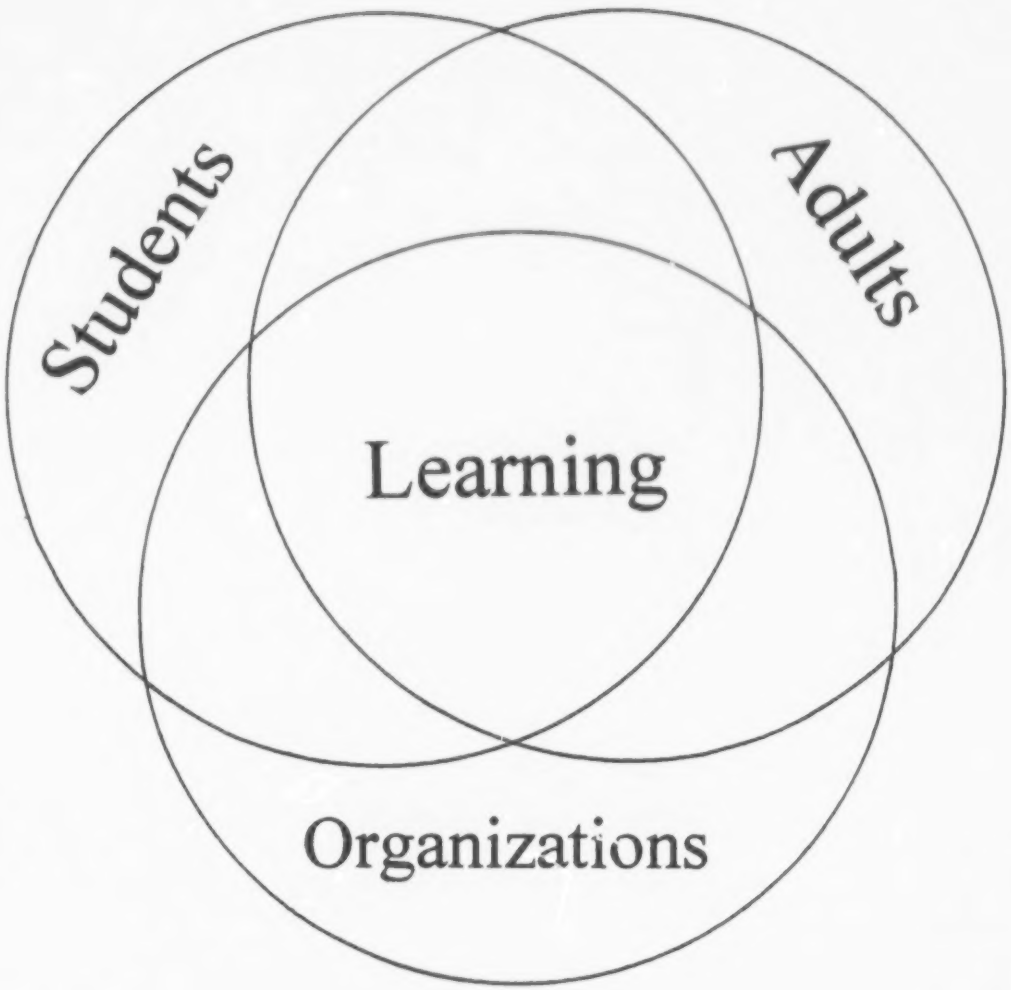
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